



**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES
DELINQUENCY AND COURT SERVICES DIVISION**

Milwaukee County

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Milwaukee County Juvenile Justice System Stakeholders

Subject: Delinquency Court Services Division System Overview

In an effort to increase effectiveness of service delivery throughout the Milwaukee County Juvenile Justice System, the Delinquency Court Services Division (DCSD) has focused on implementing Evidence-Based Practices (EBP). Our goal is to reduce further offending and to help youth find a positive direction for their lives by systematically introducing evidence-based assessment, intervention, treatment, and management practices that research has shown reduce the risk of re-offending.

The first, and foundational principle of EBP is to use an actuarial risk and needs assessment instrument. Such a tool, if implemented with fidelity, provides many benefits, including a consistent unit of measurement from which to study the efficacy of subsequent casework, programming oversight, a common language to enhance communication, and streamlined information gathering with the use of the same tool and reports, etc.

Delinquency Court Services Division utilizes the Youth Assessment & Screening Instrument (YASI) which is a “structured instrument” that looks to identify both the static (unchangeable characteristics) and the dynamic (changeable characteristics) risk factors of troubled youth in order to help Human Service Worker professionals manage their caseloads and to better structure and target services to those youth with higher needs.

The YASI assesses 10 domains: legal history, family, school, community/peers, alcohol/drugs, mental health, violence/aggression, attitudes, skills, and use of free time/employment. The static and dynamic risk factors assessed in YASI are supported by many years of accumulated research on the predictors of delinquent behavior and is an instrument specially designed for youth. The YASI instrument contains highly relevant assessment content and profiles the factors that are critical to promoting positive outcomes for troubled youth. The YASI also includes a brief “Pre-Screen” version (32 items) used to assist in early decision-making and in assigning case resources.

YASI identifies overall levels of risk to re-offend, as well as a youth’s criminogenic needs. Addressing these needs has been shown through research to reduce their risk of re-offending. The YASI also provides a mechanism for triaging youth, when first presented to the court, to determine what level of intervention (if any) fits the youth’s risk to re-offend. This triage allows us to provide needed services only to those that are most at risk to re-offend. In addition, the most

appropriate level of service delivery is identified for the youth (e.g. diversion, intervention, probation, Wraparound or out of home placement).

Currently under development is a detention risk assessment instrument (DRAI), through the Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative (JDAI), that will be used to screen youth brought to secure detention by law enforcement and both a sanction and disposition response grid that will address a youth's risk and protective factors, but from a perspective that will assist both the DCSD Human Service Worker and juvenile justice system partners in working together with the youth to develop an intervention plan that meets both the needs of the youth and public safety.

The most important aspect of having a common assessment and evaluation process across our continuum of services (from intake to post-deposition) is that it provides a common language for information sharing across program areas and between programs. Subsequent assessments serve as indicators of progress and improvement that will correlate with recidivism reduction, which increases public protection. This information will tell us which of our programs are making the greatest impact and assist with directing limited resources. It also provides a summary of assessment information that outlines a program's treatment successes by domain or category and will assist staff with identifying appropriate service levels.

The Youth Assessment & Screening Instrument and Case Management System is a *comprehensive process* that addresses both criminogenic needs and protective factors, from the moment a youth enters the system to the moment they exit. By outlining the most effective way to work with our youth, while providing efficiencies for staff and programs, we allow for the youth's time in our care to be used as effectively as possible, and in turn, allow for a more successful effect in reducing their risk to re-offend.

Using a detention risk assessment instrument, actuarial assessment tools, cognitive behavioral interventions, and performance measures to make incremental improvements, and addressing not just the youth, but the entire family, is just a few ways that DCSD supports the mission of the Milwaukee County Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS) to secure human services for individuals who need assistance living a healthy, independent life in the community.

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